

World Health Day



First started in 1949, World Health Day is celebrated worldwide on the 7th of April each year to raise awareness and highlight an important area of health concern for the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The theme for World Health Day 2022 is **"Our planet, our health"**. This theme will help focus global attention on the COVID 19 pandemic, the health challenges of a polluted planet, and rapidly increasing diseases such as cancer, asthma, and heart disease, while seeking to foster a movement to create societies focused on well-being.

According to the World Health Organisation, more than 13 million deaths are caused by environmental factors every year, making the climate crisis one of the greatest threats to humanity.

World Health Day aims to:

- Improve understanding of universal health coverage and the importance of primary health care.
- Motivate individuals, policymakers, and healthcare workers to make universal health care a reality for everyone.
- Provide everyone with the information and services they need to take care of their health and the health of their families.
- Provide good quality and people-centred care by skilled health workers.
- Ensure commitment from policymakers to invest in primary health care.



The effect of air pollution on respiratory infection

Several studies have shown that air pollution can be a risk factor for adverse respiratory and cardiovascular health outcomes. Additionally, evidence supports the association between air pollution and respiratory infections. It has been proven that air pollutants cause oxidative stress and free radical production, which may damage the respiratory system, consequently reducing resistance to viral and bacterial infections.



Who is at risk?

Bad air quality affects everybody, but some people are more at risk than others. High-risk groups include:

Babies: Pollution exposure during pregnancy is associated with low birth weight, preterm birth and increased risk of developing asthma, rhinitis, and eczema.

Children: Polluted areas are more likely to have an increased number of children suffering from coughs, wheezing, asthma and impaired lung function.

Older individuals: older people may be at risk due to reduced lung function that occurs with ageing and the presence of co-morbid pulmonary and cardiovascular conditions.

People with pre-existing conditions: People who suffer from asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or heart disease.



Symptoms:

A lung infection can cause mild to severe symptoms. Many factors affect your chances of developing a bacterial infection, including age and general health. Symptoms may be like those of a cold or flu, but they tend to last longer. Here are the most common symptoms to expect:

- Cough that produces thick mucus
- Stabbing chest pains
- Fever
- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Crackling or rattling sounds in the lungs



Tips to protect yourself from unhealthy air

- **Don't smoke:** Smoking is a leading cause of lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- **Restrict outdoor activities:** It is best to avoid exercising, running, or even walking on a dusty day since the longer time spent outdoors means more exposure to polluted air.
- **Get vaccinated:** Vaccinate yourself against influenza every year. Check with your doctor if the pneumonia vaccine is right for you.
- **Get regular check-ups:** It is important to have regular check-ups even when you feel well since lung disease sometimes goes undetected until it is serious.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water:** Good hygiene can protect you from germs.
- **Make sure your home has proper airflow and ventilation.** Open windows in the summer, and always air out spaces after cooking and cleaning.

Do your best to make everyone's life easier. Encourage efforts to reduce pollution. This could save your life and the life of someone you care about.